

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5805

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 6803

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, AF, IN, PINT

SUBJECT: BHUTTO'S NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE VISIT--COMMENTS

REF: ISLAMABAD 6737, KABUL 4361

SUMMARY: BHUTTO'S SHARP ATTACKS ON AFGHAISTAN DURING HIS JUST-COMPLETED NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE VISIT PROBABLY BASED ON NUMBER OF FACTORS. SPEAKING TO UNEDUCATED PATHAN TRIBESMEN WHO ARE PRIME TARGETS KABUL PROPAGANDA, PRIMIN ADOPTED SIMPLISTIC BLACK AND WHITE TONE IN ORDER TO REACH THEM. BROADER CONSIDERATIONS PRESUMABLY INCLUDED CONCERN OVER INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST, STILL UNEXPLAINED SOVIET CONCESSION OF BHUTTO'S MOSCOW VISIT, AND WORRY OVER ANTICIPATED INDIAN MOVES IN KASHMIR, FROM WHICH BHUTTO HAS POSTULATED JOINT SOVIET-INDIAN-AFGHAN CONSPIRACY. FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN UNUSUAL MILITARY ACTIVITY IN AFGHANISTAN RECENTLY, WHATEVER ITS PURPOSE, HAS FED PAK SUSPICIONS OF GOA, AS HAVE RECENT UNSOLVED BOMBINGS IN NWFP. DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS, INCLUDING AHMADIYA QUESTION, WERE ALSO PROBABLY INFLUENTIAL. DESIRE IMPRESS US WITH GRAVITY SITUATION MAY HAVE PLAYED PART. WHILE BHUTTO CERTAINLY AWARE HIS INFLAMATORY SPEECHES WOULD
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CREATE STRONG REACTION IN KABUL, DOUBTFUL THAT PAKS AT THIS TIME

WISH DELIBERATELY TO EXACERBATE PAK-AFGHAN TENSIONS. WITH BHUTTO NOW TURNING TO OTHER DOMESTIC CONCERNS, PRESSURE FROM PAK SIDE LIKELY TO DIMINISH. GOP, HOWEVER, COMMITTED TO "FORWARD POLICY" IN NWFP AND BALUCHISTAN, AND THIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

1. BHUTTO'S PRESENT VISIT TO NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE HAS IN SOME WAYS BEEN A REPEAT OF HIS NOVEMBER 1973 VISIT, IN THAT HE HAS TAKEN OCCASION OF HIS PRESENCE IN AREAS BORDERING AFGHANISTAN TO MAKE SERIES OF SHARP ATTACKS ON AFGHAN GOVERNMENT. GOING BEYOND THIS, HE HAS ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY AFGHANS, INDIANS, SOVIETS AND HIS DOMESTIC NAP OPPOSITION IN AN OVERALL CONSPIRACY AGAINST PAKISTAN. TIMING OF THIS TRIP AND REASONS FOR USING IT FOR THIS PURPOSE ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR, ALTHOUGH NUMBER OF FACTORS ARE INVOLVED.

2. ONE POINT SHOULD BE NOTED AT OUTSET. IN THIS AREA OF PAKISTAN, BHUTTO HAS BEEN ADDRESSING UNEDUCATED, OFTEN PRIMITIVE PEOPLE WHOSE PRIMARY LOYALTY IS TRIBAL AND WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE THEIR MOUNTAIN VALLEYS IS SKIMPY AT BEST. TO THIS AUDIENCE, BHUTTO COULD NOT SPEAK IN TERMS AS SOPHISTICATED AS HE MIGHT TO A GROUP IN LAHORE OR KARACHI. TO SOME EXTENT, WE SUSPECT HIS VERBAL EXCESSES AND DISTORTIONS REFLECT HIS CONCEPT OF HOW TO REACH THE MINDS OF THESE FIERCE TRIBESMEN.

3. ADDITIONAL FACTOR, OF COURSE, IS THAT THESE PARTICULAR AUDIENCES ARE PRECISELY THOSE WHOM DAUD REGIME IS ATTEMPTING TO WIN IN ITS PUSHTUNISTAN CAMPAIGN. MOST ARE PATHANS, MANY WITH RELATIVES AND FELLOW TRIBESMEN ON OTHER SIDE OF BORDER. GOP MUST SEE THEM AS MOST SUSCEPTIBLE OF PAKISTANIS TO SUBVERSION FROM KABUL AND THEREFORE MOST IN NEED OF STRONG WARNING RE AFGHAN INTENTIONS. THEY ARE ALSO MOST LOGICAL TARGETS FOR INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS OF PAK VS. AFGHAN ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND WELFARE.

4. BEYOND THESE PURELY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS, BHUTTO PRESUMABLY HAD VARIOUS POLITICAL OBJECTIVES AND WAS REACTING TO A NUMBER OF POLITICAL COMPULSIONS AND PROBLEMS IN EMBARKING ON THIS SPEAKING CAMPAIGN. FOLLOWING PROBABLY WERE AMONG THEM:

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(A) TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE CAUSED PAK LEADERSHIP SERIOUS CONCERN AND ENGENDERED GOOD DEAL OF NERVOUSNESS: INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST AND LAST-MINUTE CANCELLATION BY SOVIETS OF BHUTTO'S MOSCOW VISIT. CONSTERNATION RESULTING FROM NUCLEAR TEST IS WELL KNOWN. CANCELLATION OF MOSCOW VISIT AND WAY IN WHICH IT WAS DONE HAVE PUZZLED PAKS, WHO DID NOT TAKE OFFICIAL SOVIET EXPLANATION SERIOUSLY AND ARE WORRIED THAT IT MAY REFLECT SOME HITHERTO UNDETECTED NEW THRUST IN

SOVIET POLICY TOWARD PAKISTAN.

(B) FURTHER SOURCE OF WORRY FOR BHUTTO REGIME HAS BEEN RECENT SPATE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN INDIAN KASHMIR, WHICH IS BEING READ HERE AS PRESAGING DEAL BETWEEN GOI AND SHEIKH ABDULLAH TO PROCIDE NEW STATUS FOR KASHMIR STATE (ISLAMABAD 6710). PAKS FEAR THAT THIS WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS HERE, GIVING AMMUNITION TO REGIME'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS, CREATING POSSIBLY SERIOUS PUBLIC OUTCRY, AND ENDANGERING PAKISTAN'S POSITION IN PAKISTAN-HELD (AZAD) KASHMIR.

(C) WHILE FOREGOING DOES NOT NECESSARILY EXPLAIN BHUTTO'S FOCUS ON AFGHANISTAN, PAKS ARE CHRONICALLY CONSPIRACY-MINDED. THEIR CONCERNS OVER SOVIET UNION AND INDIA CAN EASILY BE EXPANDED INTO GENUINE FEAR OF TRIPARTITE SOVIET-INDIAN-AFGHAN CONSPIRACY. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE OF AFGHAN ROLE IN SUCH A CONSPIRACY MIGHT NOT CONVINCE OUTSIDER BUT IS SUFFICIENT FOR MANY PAKS: DAUD'S MOSCOW TRIP AND VEILED REFERENCE PUSHTUNISTAN IN COMMUNIQUE, INCREASED INDIAN TECHNICAL AID TO AFGHANISTAN, WIDESPREAD ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY GREATLY EXAGGERATED REPORTS OF INDIAN MILITARY AID, RADIO KABUL'S CONTINUED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, ETC.

(D) THERE ALSO SEEMS TO BE NO QUESTION THAT GOP'S RECENTLY-EXPRESSED ALARM OVER ENHANCED MILITARY ACTIVITY IN AFGHANISTAN, EVEN THOUGH EXAGGERATED AND MISINTERPRETED, IS BASED ON AT LEAST SOME FACTS. ALTHOUGH REASONS APPEAR TO US TO BE PREPARATIONS FOR AFGHAN JULY 17 HOLIDAY AND POSSIBLE COUNTER-COUP ACTIVITIES, NO ONE DENIES THAT AFGHAN ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN USUALLY ACTIVE RECENTLY.

(E) WHILE FRONTIER PROCINCE AT MOMENT APPEARS REASONABLY STABLE POLITICALLY, REGINE HAS BEEN TROUBLED BY RASH OF
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SMALL-SCALE BOMBINGS IN PAST FEW MONTHS. NO ONE HAS YET BEEN ABLE TO PIN DOWN PERPETRATORS. WHILE THEY COULD WELL BE DISSIDENT PAKISTANIS WITH NO TIES TO KABUL, INCIDENTS COULD ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO AFGHAN AGENTS IN ABSENCE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE.

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(F) FANTI-AHMADIYA AGITATION FOLLOWING RABWAH INCIENT IN MAY HAS BEEN SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO GOP BECAUSE OF INTENSE RELIGIOUS EMOTIONS ENGENDERED AND RECOLLECTION OF SAVAGE 1953 RIOTS IN LAHORE. BHUTTO ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN MAKING STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO CONTAIN THIS ISSUE WHILE SEEKING PERMANENT SOLUTION. WHETHER OR NOT BHUTTO BELIEVES THERE ACTUALLY WAS FOREIGN HAND IN THIS AGITATION, HE PRE-SUMABLY FELT THAT ONE TACTIC TO COOL EMOTIONS OF LOYAL ORTHODOX PAKISTANI MUSLIMS WOULD BE TO WARN THEM THAT THEY WERE PLAYING INTO HANDS OF FOREIGNERS BY ATTACHING AHMADIYAS. IN FRONTIER, AFGHANS WERE LOGICAL FOREIGNERS TO BLAME.

(G) OTHER DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE ALSO ON BHUTTO'S MIND, INCLUDING CHRONIC PROBLEM OF BALUCHISTAN. IN BALUCHISTAN AND NWFP, HIS PRIMARY POLITICAL RIVAL IS, OF COURSE, NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY. ONE OF WEAPONS HE HAS CONSTANTLY USED AGAINST NAP IS CHARGE OF DISLOYALTY TO PAKISTAN AND CONNECTIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN. ACCUSATIONS OF UNFRIENDLY ACTIVITY ON PART OF GOA THUS CAN SERVE AS ATTACK ON DOMESTIC NAP OPPOSITION AS WELL.

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(H) IN ADDITION TO FOREGOING FOREIGN POLICY AND DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS, BHUTTO IS ALSO ENGAGED IN SUSTAINED EFFORT TO CONVINCE USG TO CHANGE ITS PRESENT RESTRICTIVE ARMS POLICY TOWARD PAKISTAN. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN EXTENT

TO WHICH BHUTTO'S DESIRE PERSUADE US OF EXTERNAL THREATS TO PAKISTAN MAY HAVE INFLUENCED HARSH LINE HE HAS USED AGAINST AFGHANISTAN, BUT IT MAY WELL HAVE BEEN ONE FACTOR.

3. WHILE BHUTTO CERTAINLY KNEW THAT INFLAMMATORY SPEECHES WOULD CAUSE CONSTERNATION IN KABUL, WE DOUBT THAT DELIBERATE DECISION TO ESCALATE LEVEL OF AFGHAN-PAK DISPUTE HAS BEEN MADE OR THAT PAKS ARE ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN EXACERBATING TENSIONS AT THIS STAGE. AS SUGGESTED ABOVE, BHUTTO'S MOTIVES APPEAR TO STEM IN PART FROM PURELY LOCAL NEFP MATTERS, IN PART FROM GENUINE CONCERN OVER MAJOR RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INVOLVING COUNTRIES (SOVIET UNION AND INDIA) WHICH PAS SEE AS SUPPORTERS OF AFGHANISTAN, AND IN PART FROM BORAD DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. WHILE INFLAMMATORY INVECTIVE IS TO BE DEPLORED FROM WHICHEVER SIDE IT COMES, WE WOULD EXPECT SOME DIMINUTION OF PRESSURE FROM PAKISTANI SIDE NOW THAT BHUTTO'S FRONTIER TRIP IS OVER AND HE IS PREPARING A POLITICAL TOUR OF SIND.

4. OVER LONG TERM, HOWEVER, ANY SIGNIFICANT EASING OF PAK-AFGHAN TENSIONS SEEMS UNLIKELY AS LONG AS DAUD REGIME CONTINUES TO PRESS ITS CURRENT POSITION ON PUSHTUNISTAN. BHUTTO ADMINISTRATION HAS ADOPTED "FORWARD POLICY" IN BORDER AREAS OF NWFP AND BALUCHISTAN ONLY PARTY OUT OF CONCERN FOR AFGHAN PRESSURE. BHUTTO HAS MAJOR DOMESTIC OBJECTIVE OF BRINGING ALL AREAS OF COUNTRY UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL FROM ISLAMABAD AND ALSO HAS SOCIO-ECONOMIC GOAL OF BRINGING TRIBLA ELEMENTSOF PAKISTAN SOCIETY INTO 20TH CENTURY. THUS, WHATEVER POSITION AFGHANS MAY ADOPT, WE WOULD EXPECT GOP TO CONTINUE ITS POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC PENETRATION INTO PAKI-STAN'S TRIBAL AREAS.BYROADE

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